

Home-Life

in Lands

Not

Christian

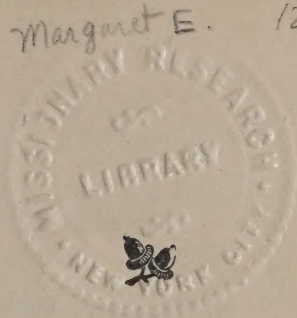
Korea


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HOME-LIFE IN KOREA.

From twelve to twenty millions of people, living in a country no larger than Utah, of great natural beauty and delightful climate, where there are "hills, hills again, and hills without number," are awaiting the coming of Christ in the peninsula known to us as Korea. The natives call it Chosön—The Land of Morning Calm.

KOREAN HOUSES are built principally of mud. The roofs are generally thatched. The floors are of mud or stone, and are slightly raised, to permit of a *khan*, or furnace, underneath. A series of flues conduct the heat to the different apartments, so that the houses seldom lack warmth. The ordinary houses contain three rooms. Windows, where there are any, are of oiled paper, the doors of the same material, bamboo or wood, all sliding in grooves. Beautiful bamboo Venetian blinds are used additionally by the

rich. In large cities there are a few buildings constructed of wood and brick, roofed with red tiles, and some after the pretty Chinese style, showing good workmanship in being perfectly fitted.

Among the poorer classes the interiors are generally
INTERIORS. dirty and uninviting, destitute of all furniture or utensils, except those absolutely necessary for eating and drinking. Earthenware is used at meals by the poor, and Chinese porcelain by the rich. Chopsticks and spoons are common to all. In the houses of the gentry, meals are served on little low tables, which are covered with glazed paper, resembling silk. Jars, large enough to hold a man, for storing rice, barley, or water, are found in all kitchens. Bedsteads are unknown, the poor sleeping on matting on the heated floors in the clothes they wear during the day, with blocks of wood for pillows and coverings of quilted cotton. The rich use a species of mattress similarly disposed. Insect life exists in filthy plenitude. The rich possess tables, chairs, Chinese scrolls, and pottery, but regard them as decorations. Floor coverings range from matting and dog skins to tiger skins. If walls are decorated, a colored plaster or elegant paper of native manufacture is used. There is no ventilation, and the general atmosphere is smoky. The women's apartment is secluded, opening into

an inner private court. Castor oil was used for lights until the recent introduction of cheap kerosene.

APPEARANCE AND DRESS. The Koreans are a larger people physically than the Chinese or Japanese, with finer features. They have the yellow skin and slanting eyes of their neighbors in a reduced degree. Till marriage, the hair of both sexes is worn in braids hanging down the back. At marriage a man's hair is gathered on the head in a top-knot, which shows him entitled to enter into the counsels of men. It is the emblem of his manhood and part of his religion. After marriage, a woman's hair is dressed in Japanese style and decorated with long, fancy pins.

All Koreans have beautiful hands and naturally small feet. The nails receive great care, but are worn too long to suit Western ideas of beauty. Women of the working class are old at thirty, the result of endless hard labors.

The national costume is almost universally white, though this is not now obligatory. The material used is mostly cotton of native manufacture. As the Koreans are not a very clean people, the dress generally has a soiled appearance. Silk is worn only by the nobility or high func-

all classes wear silk

brooches
tionaries, and comes from China. Men wear extremely wide trousers, confined at the ankle, or loose-flowing, and a short jacket extending just below the hips. The rich wear long silk robes, confined at the waist with a cord, to which are attached tobacco pouches, pipes and fans. Sleeves are sometimes two feet wide, and answer the purpose of pockets. Buttons and pins are not used; clothes are tied on. Several silk jackets of different colors are worn at the same time. White is also worn in winter, but jackets are quilted or lined with sheepskin. Several suits are worn at once, and put off, one by one, as it gets warmer. The rich wear Chinese shoes or long cloth boots; the poor, straw-plaited sandals, white cotton shoes, or raised wooden shoes. Men's hats are intended primarily to protect and display the top-knot. Their fashion is five hundred years old. They are made of crinoline or fine split bamboo, lacquered in black, and are transparent. They are tied on, and retained on the head as a mark of respect. Spectacles of large, dark crystals are much prized, and pipes are three feet long.

A woman's costume consists of several pairs of loose trousers, covered by a starched skirt or silk robe, made to touch the ground. In cases of working women, they reach only to the ankle. A jacket, which answers the purpose of a corset, is worn, and over this a short upper jacket, which

only one pair

often leaves an expanse of bare skin visible. The eyebrows are shaved to a narrow line. Rouge, powder, and hair-oil are much used.

Children are costumed in gay colors, but are not infrequently seen as nature made them. Their heads are shaved, except a tuft on the crown.

FOOD AND DRINK. Koreans are large eaters. Rice and a sort of pickled weed are the staple dishes. A quart of uncooked rice is the usual quantity for a working man, but, if he had it, he could easily eat twice as much. Great quantities of fish are eaten, generally raw. Beef is scarce. Pork, fowls and game are plentiful. Dog meat is much relished in summer, when it is said to be at its best. Vegetables consist of beans, peas, lily-bulbs, seaweed, acorns, and the unpopular potato. Ginseng, the Korean cure-all (more precious than gold), is largely cultivated. Fruits are plentiful. Tea is almost unknown, and but little cultivated. Liquor is distilled from millet, barley and rice, and is indulged in freely by the natives, who love strong drink. Korea abounds in many pure springs.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS. As in other Eastern countries, the seclusion of women among the upper classes is absolute. It is necessarily less so among the laboring classes, as women work in the fields, carry heavy loads to market, weave, spin, draw

water, husk rice, make all the clothes of the household, cook the meals, and do all the interminable laundry work the wearing of white entails. Women of rich families do no domestic work. The sexes are separated at the age of seven years, boys being relegated to the men's apartments and girls to the women's. Family life is impossible under these conditions.

A Korean woman exists solely for man's pleasure and profit. She possesses no political or moral status. At birth she is scarcely welcome. During girlhood only her nearest of kin may speak to her. She is nameless, and only known as the daughter of somebody. Marriage is arranged for her by her father, who, perhaps, buys her a husband she has never seen. She is then spoken of as the wife of somebody. Not until she is known as the mother of somebody does she possess any status. As there are no native schools for girls, only about two women in a thousand can read. Remarriage is not forbidden in case of a husband's death, though not long since perpetual widowhood, and even suicide of widows, were commended to the point of erecting memorial gateways and temples in honor of the victims. A woman cannot divorce her husband for any reason, but he may divorce her for any one of seven reasons, namely, incurable disease, childlessness, infidelity, jealousy, theft, incompatibility with her parents-in-law, and a quarrelsome disposition, but as a man may not remarry, there are few divorces.

Formerly child-marriages were frequent and lawful, occurring at the early age of nine years, but it is now illegal for girls to marry under sixteen. The marriage service is unaccompanied by any religious ceremony. The bride, whose face is painted a dead white, with patches of vivid red on the cheeks, is led in and placed opposite the groom on a platform. Neither speaks. The bride courtesies twice to the groom, and the groom bows four times to the bride. These salutations before witnesses constitute a legal ceremony. A goose, typifying fidelity (a feminine virtue), is always brought by the groom. The bride withdraws to the women's apartments, the groom to the men, feasting separately. Absolute silence on the wife's part is requisite, both during the ceremony and afterwards. She is a passive nonentity, and goes to her husband's home as a part of his goods and chattels. Love is not required, nor domestic happiness expected. Husbands are never seen conversing with their wives, rarely consult them on serious matters, and do not openly mourn their death. Concubinage is common; polygamy forbidden.

is very happy. Children are loved by both men and women. A child's first lesson is obedience and respect for his father. Families are small, as a rule, and boys are more highly regarded than girls. Children are not exposed (to death),

though they have been sold in times of famine. The mortality among them is very great. Children by first marriages have special rights over those by second marriages, while children of concubines have no social standing.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP is the real religion of Korea. Buddhism was disestablished five centuries ago, and Confucianism is now the official religion, but it is held in little reverence, not so much owing to a lack of moral sentiment, as to contempt for the degraded priesthood, who rank below the "despicable caste" and just above slaves or bondsmen. The most sacred names in Korea are father and mother. A Korean's hope of eternal life is through posterity. To that end he marries his sons in childhood, and if he has none of his own to perform the ancestral sacrifices, he will adopt a near male relative. Ancestral tablets are in every room, before which offerings are made to spirits of departed parents, night and morning for three years, by the children. After this period they are only made on the anniversary of the births and deaths and on four national fete days. This custom is universal, and shows a devoutness unequalled by any other people. To be faithful to the dead is a more sacred duty in their view than to care for and protect the living.

Burial is a matter of the gravest consideration. It is so important that the site be propitiously selected that geomancers are consulted and bodies left to rot in the sun while the search is being conducted. Mountains are preferred as sites, being looked upon as dragons able to protect the dead. To touch an ancestral grave is to pay the forfeit with your life. Marriages are often postponed many years, as they cannot take place until after the expiration of the time of mourning.

DEMONISM has as firm a hold on the Hermit Realm as has ancestor worship. The special vocation of the blind is to exorcise devils, and the country is overrun with fortune-tellers and astrologers. All bad fortune, particularly sickness, is attributed to evil spirits. Earth, air, trees, the roof, the well, the fireplace, are all peopled by devils to be propitiated. Snakes are particularly venerated, and weasels and pigs are worshipped.

Offerings are made to the gods of small-pox and cholera. Medical missions are proving the best charm against this barbarous bondage, and with Christ's help will emancipate the nation from it.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. In recent years the traditional customs of Korea have undergone great and rapid changes. The Japanese conquest and the influx of foreigners have revolutionized the ideas of former days, and the

rapid spread of education is transforming the new generation. The wonderful progress of Christianity, in spite of war and political disturbance, is the best hope for the future of Korea. The first Korean Christian was baptized in 1886. Now the Presbyterian Churches alone number more than twenty-five thousand members, in whose homes Christ is worshipped and obeyed. The devotion and self-sacrifice shown by the people in supporting their churches and schools is worthy of the highest praise.

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Washington, D. C.

Price, 2 cents; 20 cents per dozen.

